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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

Tuesday, July 4, 1944.

Subject: WOMEN'S LAND ARMY: Information from farm labor officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

The Fourth of July is a fine day to talk about offering your services to farmers who are desperate for help this summer.

For it was largely the farmers you remember, who left their fields and took up the march that gave us Independence Day. On this July Fourth. . . a hundred and sixty-eight years later . . . more than a million farmers have left their fields and marched away to help maintain the independence won by those American farmers of long ago. Farmers of 1944 are keeping faith with the Boy's of '76, and '44.

Now as then, the farm jobs must go on. And the folks left at home . . . the older men, the women, and the boys and girls . . . must do them. There's nobody else Last year 600,000 Land Army women put on overalls and wide-brimmed hats and helped produce the biggest crops that ever came from our soil. This year, our food goals are set still higher. For every three women who did Farm work last year, the Women's Land Army needs four workers this year.

Thousands of women are already on the job . . . "farmers' daughters" they're calling them in some places. Thousands more are planning to join their sisters when they get their vacations or over weekends, or for any other period of time they can spare.

Every day the mailbag of the Extension Service of the War Food Administration brings questions from women who want to serve on farms this year. Maybe the answers to these questions are of interest to you. One woman asks this question: "I have spent most of my life keeping house for my husband who is a small-town business man. I've always had a garden and my health is good. Would I be any help on a farm."

Would she? Listen to what the Extension Service told her: "Certainly you can help if you are healthy and willing. Thousands of homemakers . . . many of them elderly women . . . did farm work last year and got along fine. Many are already in fields this year. Back in March a Mississippi woman who has been a seamstress most of her life heard a radio broadcast about the Women's Land Army. As soon as it was over she went to see her county agricultural agent and enrolled for farm work. She took away some cards away with her, and pretty soon she had enrolled a crew of helpers . . . . eight men, one elderly man, and two boys. As you might expect in Mississippi, the first job was chopping cotton. The whole crew chopped only six acres the first two days, but they stuck to their work and improved so fast they soon averaged ten acres a day. When the cotton fields need them no longer, they say they'll work in the cornfields and the truck crops."

Here's another question from the Extension Service mailbag. An Illionis woman wrote: "I live in Chicago and work there. I leave my office at 5:30 Friday afternoon and from that time until nine o'clock Monday morning, I'm free to work on a farm and would welcome the chance to be outdoors. Is there anything I can do weekends?

Promptly the answer went back from the Extension Service that weekend workers can help farmers in many ways. The Extension workers advised this woman to get in touch with her county agricultural agent at once. The County Agent knows the farmers who need help, and will tell her what to do. There's a great need around Chicago for workers to detassel hybrid corn. Goals for hybrid seed corn are 10 percent higher this year. Recent crop reports of the Department of Agriculture say the planting season was very late in many places, and prospects for corn are only fair. So we'll need to do all we can to boost corn production. Detasseling is an important corn-growing job that anyone can easily learn. Women did yeoman service at it last year, and they are needed again this season.

Transportation questionsturn up regularly in the Extension Service mailbag. Women want to know if their transportation will be paid to other parts of the country to do farm work. The answer is: not as a general rule. There are three reasons why this is true. First, there is usually a need for farm workers nearer home. Second, our railroads and buses are already taxed to the limit, and it is poor management to haul farm workers long distances to help farmers when there's plenty of farm work to do near home. Third, the cost of transportation to distant points is too heavy to balance the earnings of farm workers. In certain States and under certain conditions, transportation may be paid to farm jobs within the State. But the worker must enroll for a period long enough to justify the transportation cost involved.

Another mail bag question of general interest is about gas for farm work. A city woman writes: "A friend and I are considering doing farm work during our vacations. We have a car to get to the country in, but can we get gas?" The Office of Price Administration says yes to this question. Ration boards will give volunteer farm workers gas to take them to and from places where their services are needed.

Weary clubwomen are asking questions about farm work. They want to know how they can help. Well . . . there're several ways. For one thing, where local food crops are threatened with loss for lack of seasonal help, clubwomen can assist in harvesting these crops. They can work individually, or better still, they can organize a unit of club members as a field crew. Also, they can help the county agricultural agent to recruit farm workers among their relatives and friends. Or they can serve as work leaders to supervise groups of Victory Farm Volunteers--boys and girls between 14 and 17 years old. Last year, several clubwomen organized and operated day-care centers for children whose mothers wanted to do farm work.

The war went into high-gear with the invasion of France. Our need for extra farm workers to produce food is greater then ever. Any woman who wants to do farm work should at once get in touch with her county agricultural agent or her nearest farm labor office.